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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Return of population and refugees displaced since 1967

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of paragraph 3 of its resolution 48/40 F of 10 December 1993, entitled "Return of population and refugees displaced since 1967", the operative paragraphs of which read as follows:

> "The General Assembly,
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> "...
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> "1. Reaffirms the inalienable right of all displaced inhabitants to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967;
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> "2. Calls upon Israel to accelerate the necessary steps for the unimpeded return of all displaced inhabitants;
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> "3. Requests the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to report to the General Assembly, before the opening of its forty-ninth session, on the compliance of Israel with paragraph 2 above."

2. On 27 July 1994, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any steps his Government had taken or envisaged to take in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution.

3. In a note verbale dated 27 July 1994, the Permanent Representative of Israel replied as follows:

> "Israel's position on these resolutions has been set forth in successive annual replies submitted to the Secretary-General in recent years, the latest of which being Israel's note verbale dated 15 June 1993. In addition, Israel's representative to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee reiterated Israel's position in his statement dated 8 December 1993 in which he said, inter alia, 'The series of resolutions on UNRWA ignores the new political reality following the agreement between Israel and the PLO, as well as the bilateral and multilateral negotiations.' Accordingly, Israel abstained on resolutions 48/40 A and D, and voted against resolutions 48/40 E to J.
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> "It should be noted that, in the past year, major progress has been achieved in the framework of the peace process, including the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington, D.C. on 13 September 1993 by Israel and the PLO, and the subsequent Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, signed in Cairo on 4 May 1994. Israel believes that UNRWA can play an important role in promoting the social and economic advancement foreseen in the agreements between Israel and the PLO, and accordingly looks forward to continuing the cooperation and good working relationship with UNRWA.
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> "In the light of the above, Israel considers it essential, now more than ever, that the General Assembly focus its resolutions regarding UNRWA on the issues directly related to the agency's humanitarian tasks and that it refrain from adopting resolutions related to political issues irrelevant to the work for which UNRWA is responsible, and detached from the new reality.
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> "To this end, it would be advisable to consolidate the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly regarding UNRWA into one resolution. This would also be compatible with the necessity to rationalize the work of the General Assembly."

4. In connection with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 48/40 F, the Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA the information available to him on the return of refugees registered with the Agency. As indicated in previous reports on the subject, the Agency is not involved in any arrangements for the return of refugees nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons who are not registered as refugees. Its information is based on requests by returning registered refugees for transfer of their entitlements for services to the areas to which they have returned and subsequent correction of records. The Agency would not necessarily be aware of the return of any registered refugees who did not request the provision of services. So far as is known to the Agency, between 1 July 1993 and 30 June 1994, 376 refugees registered with UNRWA returned to the West Bank and 79 to the Gaza Strip. It should be noted that some of these may not themselves have been displaced in 1967, but may be members of the family of a displaced registered refugee whom they accompanied on his return or joined thereafter. Thus, taking into account the estimate given in paragraph 4 of last year's report (A/48/375), the number of displaced registered refugees who are

known by the Agency to have returned to the occupied territories since June 1967 is about 13,200. The Agency is unable to estimate the total number of displaced inhabitants who have returned. It keeps records only of registered refugees and, as pointed out above, even those records, particularly with respect to location of registered refugees, may be incomplete.